DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 293 528 IR 013 053

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TITLE Foreign Television Programmes on New Zealand Television: Windows on the World or Wicked Imperialism?
PUB DATE Jul 86
NOTE 27p.; Paper presented at the International Television Studies Conference (London, England, July 10-12, 1986).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Audience Analysis; Broadcast Industry; *Content Analysis; Cultural Influences; Foreign Countries; *Mass Media Effects; Nationalism; *Programing (Broadcast); Scheduling; Television Research; User Satisfaction (Information)
IDENTIFIERS *Australia; *New Zealand; United States

ABSTRACT

Focusing on the experience of New Zealand, this paper is a response to a 1978 essay which suggested that a study be done to compare the programming patterns of television in the developed countries of Australia and New Zealand. Significant differences between the two nations are presented, including conspicuous discrepancies in television programming, despite similar shared social and cultural characteristics. A need for cooperative research efforts by Australian and New Zealand media scholars is noted, and some limited New Zealand research is summarized, including content analyses and program ratings. Numerous areas for fruitful research are suggested, many of which center on audience reactions and attitudes about viewing Australian, American, and United Kingdom imports, as well as on other aspects of television programming and scheduling. The production of television genres other than the more costly, less effective indigenous drama programs is advocated as the best means of inculcating a sense of national identity. The need for research to investigate the influence of "cultural imperialism" on Australian and New Zealand television audiences is stressed. An analysis of the national origins of television programs shown in New Zealand is appended. (40 end notes) (CGD)

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Foreign Television Programmes on New Zealand Television: Windows on the World or Wicked Imperialism?

PAPER PRESENTED TO THE 1986 INTERNATIONAL TELEVISION STUDIES CONFERENCE, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON, JULY 1986

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In his 1978 essay 'The Mass Media and One-Way Flow,' Richard Hoggart writes that his 'favourite pilot study' would be one that compared the programming patterns of television in the 'two developed countries' of Australia and New Zealand'.[1] This paper offers something to such a study, by focusing on the experience of the junior partner, New Zealand.

Despite the notion abroad that Australia and New Zealand are intimately bound together and altogether identical in their cultural and social characteristics, Australians and New Zealanders are divided by significant and persistent differences. These occur at all kinds of levels, including relationships with other countries (made graphic in 1985 by New Zealand's stand-off with the third partner in the ANZUS alliance), as well as the level of confidence in displaying a sense of national identity.[2]

In terms of television, on both a systems and programming level, there are conspicuous differences. Television in New Zealand is a monopolistic, two-channel, nationally-distributed system, funded by a combination of licence fee, advertising, and sponsorship. Beneath the bureaucratic umbrella of the Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand (BCNZ), Television New Zealand (TVNZ) provides near-total coverage of the country for an estimated audience of slightly less than three million. Both commercial considerations and public service objectives have to be accommodated within this limited set of options. The licence fee has remained since 1975 and this has meant that there has been a massive shift towards reliance on other income. In early 1986, the ratio was 83:17 in favour of income from non-licence sources, prompting internationally familiar cries of despair about the decline of public service television and the triumph of commercial imperatives. The debate has been heightened by the Labour Government's plans to encourage the establishment of a third, privately-owned channel. Nevertheless changes will come slowly and their impact is difficult to predict. In the meantime, the New Zealand television system provides a quite unique example of the hybridisation of system, somehow accommodating the sometimes conflicting and sometimes complementary aspects of the BBC and ITV systems within one organisation.

Australia has a very different kind of television. Public service obligations are met by the government-funded Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). Commercial television is provided by three big commercial networks. Differences between television in New Zealand and television in Australia are not just a matter of scale; there are also significant differences in attitudes and utilisation.

In a recent Sight and Sound, Nick Roddick contributed a very lively, outsiders appraisal of television in Australia, ('Strewth! A Beginner's Guide to Australian Television'),[3] which provides as much novelty for a New Zealander reader as it would for a British reader. He describes Australian television as, 'one of the true marvels of twentieth century culture. It is a unique combination of BBC-style public service broadcasting and US-style commercial ratings war'. Unlike New Zealand, where such conflicts are reconciled 'in-house', Australian viewers make their own decisions by merely switching channels.

Roddick notes that Australian viewers do make such choices, opting for the 'same staples of television as American viewers'. The staples include sport, soap operas, games shows, and television films. A good slice of such programming comes from the United States (Dynasty and Dallas) but it is being matched by indigenous versions of these genre, such as televised one-day cricket; The Young Doctors and A Country Practice; A Perfect Match and Return to Eden.

Roddick notes some of this production is motivated by attempts to meet Australian content quotas, by a fairly lackadasical route. The content quotas, or 'points system' administered by the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, shares the spirit of other international moves towards regulating to protect local programming industries and is generally regarded as positive reinforcement for increases in local content. No such formal structure exists in New Zealand, although calls for quotas from television actors, writers and producers, (especially those independent of Television New Zealand), are now increasingly heard.

There is evidence that locally-produced television programmes are being well-received by Australian audiences. In the second period of 1983,

for instance, A Country Practice topped the Sydney ratings with 32.7% of television households. The apparent appetite for local television productions is matched by an appetite for television generally. In an 1984 survey, the Television Bureau of Advertising concluded that, 'the impact of TV on the lives of Australians is greater than any other medium'. [5] Roddick makes similar observations,

> Australia has embraced television with the same fervour with which certain South Pacific islands took to the cargo cult. It is a largely unproblematic love affair, similarly dependent on phantom goodies from overseas.

Philip Adams, the outspoken cultural critic and chairman of the Australian Film Commission, uses the same metaphor;

> We were like the cargo cultists of the Pacific Islands, joyfully celebrating the mystical aircraft full of magic goodies. Now the culture of the foreign power is so all-pervasive that we accept it as our culture ... A Country Practice and Reg Grundy and Hector Crawford notwithstanding, most of our television time is occupied by foreign programming and the overwhelming majority of that alien imagery is American. And specifically Californian.
>
> Our television programmes are either American or Americanised (except for) the ABC whose cultural cringing involves the British and whose loyalty to London makes their network the BBC's third channel. 6

Adams declares that his stance is not anti-American but pro-Australian, 'indeed it is almost vehemently pro-Australian and uncompromisingly nationalistic'. He fails, however, to provide a satisfactory explanation of the colour and texture of Australian culture would be, after overseas influences have been repatriated. The examples he offers tend to be slight, visible manifestations of popular culture and matters of preservation rather than new or unique forms. He pleads for 'local content' in Australian hamburgers ('egg and beetroot', rather McDonald's content), and local 'moleskins' instead of American denims.

His argument has more substance when he points out that many locally-produced television programmes are 'Americanised', borrowing the formats, style, language and look of their American proto-types. It is possible, however, to argue that such models are not longer inherently American modes, but internationally adopted and approved television genres.

In his 1983 article, 'A Backwater Awash: the Australian Experience

of Americanisation', Richard White notes that there is a tendency amongst Australian cultural critics whereby 'anti-Americanism becomes the basis of the whole critique. Ford, Kelloggs and Hollywood are attacked merely on the grounds that they are American.' [7] As with Adams, White acknowledges that imported influences can be more significant when they are imbedded within the structure of artifacts, such as Australian soap operas modelled on American examples.

Although White is more thorough than Adams in his analysis of culture, both critics fail to fully answer a number of pertinent questions, for example: What is Australian 'culture'? What is an uniquely Australian television programme? Is there sufficient Australian raw material--stories, styles, actors and producers--available to mould into indigenous shapes, to displace imported programming? What is the audience response to such displacement likely to be? Would increased local production be based on experimentation, or be reworkings of established television formulas?

But this has been a lengthy digression from the original intention to look at television in New Zealand. It is fruitful, however, to pay some attention to New Zealand's nearest neighbour, for many of the questions above also apply to New Zealand. It is rather too tall an order, nonetheless, to ask a New Zealander to explain things Australian (especially for one who has never travelled there!) There is a need, however, for co-operative research efforts by Australian and New Zealand media scholars. This is unlikely until the level of attention paid to the media and audiences in Australia is matched by similar efforts in New Zealand. The current state of research in New Zealand compares very poorly.

It would be interesting, for example, to examine the response of New Zealand audiences to the numerous Australian programmes on New Zealand screens. There has been a marked increase in such imports in recent years (perhaps a consequence of Closer Economic Relations?) and some have been very successful. In 1984, for instance, the final episode of the mini-series Return to Eden was the fourth most popular programme for the year, attracting a substantial

53.5 per cent of the viewing audience. [8]

Because they have become such a conspicuous addition to New Zealand television schedules, Australian programmes have further complicated the mix available and have introduced yet another factor in the politics of choice which characterises much of viewing behaviour in New Zealand. It is possible to argue, for example, that for some viewers Australian programmes are merely American programmes once-removed, with their value being judged by this criteria. Several critics suggested that this was so with the return of Return to Eden on New Zealand screens in early 1986, commenting that the only authentic Australian character in this tale of lust and deceit was the crocodile which savaged the heroine of the saga.

The few content analyses available confirm that Australian programmes, together with imports from the United States and the United Kingdom, outweigh local content. . One analysis of four weeks (November-December 1985) of programme listings in the New Zealand Listener (the New Zealand version of The Listener and the Radio Times) provides the following counts of programmes (excluding feature films), categorised by country of origin. It should be noted that these are counts of whole programmes and do not account for items within programmes (such as news reports originating outside the country), nor do they account for commercial breaks (approximately nine minutes per hour on commercial nights).

TABLE 1

USA	UK	NZ	AUST	OTHER
39.7%	19.1%	34.9%	5.3%	1.00%

(For more detailed table see Appendix)

The level of New Zealand programming is probably inflated in the table above, as a result of the inclusion of a significant number of programmes which are designated as New Zealand-produced material but which contain a majority of imported content. For example, the very popular Ready To Roll,

a weekly survey of the Top Twenty charts with video inserts, is categorised as a New Zealand production by Television New Zealand. The majority of each half-hour usually consists of imported material, primarily from the United States and the United Kingdom, including some direct satellite items (in late 1985 there were 'video firsts' from Stevie Wonder and Grace Jones).

In the absence of any readily accessible running-tally (either from Television New Zealand or outside watch-dog), the only available form of verification of level of television imports is by such short-term analyses. Some data is available from other sources but it tends to be in the nature of large generalisations, and in a number of cases, out-of-date. In Tapio Varis's 1971 Inventory, New Zealand ranked fourth in the list of the heaviest importers, with an estimated 75% of programming being imported. [9] Based on sample weeks, this Inventory fails to describe where these imports originated. A four-week content analysis in 1983 of television schedules (Lealand, 1983) established that approximately 35% was New Zealand-produced (45% in peak viewing hours, 7-10pm), with the remaining 65% divided between the U.S.(38%), U.K. (20%), and Australia (7%). [10] Ritchie (1977) cited 60% as being the American contribution to New Zealand's overseas purchases. [11] Day (1975) indicated that, in the mid-1970s, 60% of foreign purchases came from the United States. [12]

The 100th issue of Televiews, the Marketing Services publication of Television New Zealand, provided the following data on drama screened in New Zealand during 1982-84: [13]

TABLE 2.

	1982 Winter	1983 New	1983 Winter	1984 New	1984 Winter
6-11pm Commercial Days % of Schedule	49	47	44	47	43
Origin % UK :	23	19	34	26	33
USA :	51	60	46	51	37
NZ :	6	6	0	4	9
AUS :	20	15	20	19	21

The great majority of television programmes imported from the United States are classed as 'drama' by Television New Zealand. According to Televiews, the United States as one of the two major suppliers of drama, 'remains the primary source of entertainment and escapist fare; series not designed to stimulate the thinking brainwaves, catering to crime, adventure, action and fantasy entertainment.'

Curiously, by making such statements, television executives may be giving ammunition to the many critics of their purchasing and scheduling decisions. There seems to be a visible lack of faith in many American purchases, in such statements as :

> New Zealand's programme purchasers sustain our needs with the best drama (and indeed each category) shows available, even though many would consider that the best of a bad bunch. This does enable an escape from America's rampant desire of cloning, New Zealand barely being exposed to the tip of the iceberg, particularly relevant in the night-soap phenomenon.

Such statements, from the system itself, are not too disimilar from frequently-pronounced public condemnations of the nature of American television imports. According to Des Monaghan (Controller of Programming for Television New Zealand) such imports vary in style and quality year by year;

> I will buy as many or as few as I think appropriate. Quality and the range of product on offer will determine the final mix in New Zealand. It happens that the volume is much the same from year to year. Programme types within that volume may vary markedly. One year the Americans may be strong in comedy and the next year be stronger in action shows. 14

Consequently it may be misleading to judge the nature of American televisions screening in New Zealand in 1986, from statements about those on display in 1984. In 1986, for example, both comedy (The Cosby Show) and action shows (Miami Vice) are popular and 'night-soaps' not so conspicuously so. It is probably more fruitful to look at such examples of audience popularity and/or disfavour than to merely note the presence of American programmes in television schedules.

It cannot be denied that, on a simple numerical basis, American programmes dominate television fictions offering on New Zealand screens. The counts in Table 2 confirms that indigenous production of television drama has,

and continues to be, pitifully minute in comparison to drama imported. The majority of New Zealand-originated productions which contribute to the 34.9% per cent cited in Table 1 tend to be 'factual' television messages (that is, sport, news and information, light entertainment).

Any assessment of the consequences of this situation, however, requires more than simple accounting. Empirical data, in the form of measures of audience behaviour and response, is a better guide for assessing the 'effects' of this imbalance than any of the generalities of the Cultural Imperialism thesis. Imposing such a thesis on the New Zealand situation does not permit any investigation of the subtleties resulting from years of viewing experience. For example, after twenty or more years of high levels of American television programmes on New Zealand screens, audience measurements show that there has been a mixed and varied reaction. If the premises of the Cultural Imperialism thesis are to be upheld, any complexities in audience behaviour should have long disappeared under the weight of a relentless tide of Kojak and I Love Lucy.

The Cultural Imperialism thesis cannot fully account for another pecularity of television in New Zealand, namely, the push-and-pull between the competing attractions of a triad of 'imperialistic' influences (British, American and Australian), and how these reflect on local attempts to emulate them. Attitudes to imported television messages increasingly reflect the degree of allegiance to colonial influences and self-consciousness about being a 'New Zealander'. For a significant number of New Zealanders, programme choice has become increasingly a political choice and it is amongst such men and women that the Cultural Imperialism contentions find credibility. This is especially true of some creative people in the New Zealand film and television world, who call for a larger and more diverse series of messages on screens in New Zealand.

For the time being, however, we will set aside the complaints of these critics and concentrate on those who consume the images currently available on New Zealand screens. Jeremy Tunstall in The Media Are American (1977) comments, 'The response of the audience is left especially unclear in the

media-imperialism thesis',[15] but recent studies have done little to redress this neglect. The work of Elihu Katz and associates is a notable exception.[16] On the whole, studies of the impact of imported television (mainly American television) have clung to the 1969 Schiller thesis,[17] with an accompanying reluctance (or disdain) for empirical testing of recipient audiences. Effects are assumed, not analysed.

It is not my intention, however, to dismiss the Cultural Imperialism thesis wholw-hog. It is a powerful proposition and its vitality is shown by its persistence. My irritation is with its blanket explanations and the way in which these have been used as a blockade against testing theory against experience. Audience research cannot of course claim to be a total explanation of reality but such records are probably more accurate representations of message-recipient relationships than the anecdotal evidence offered elsewhere, Unlike the Cultural Imperialism thesis, which assumes the existence of an anonymous, listless and defenceless audience, audience research can show evidence of filtering and selection processses alive amongst all sectors of a broad audience. Imported images are decoded, assimilated, rejected--depending upon the predispositions of the viewer. A television success in the United States does not inevitably lead to a television success in New Zealand, for example.

Other factors such as placement in the schedule, competition on the other channel, audience availability, age and gender, all need to be considered before coming to conclusions about American television in New Zealand. The following examples are provided for this purpose. In the same period as utilised in Table 1, ratings gathered by the Audience Research Unit, BCNZ show the following counts:

TABLE 3

Top Twenty Programmes Over Four Weeks (Oct26-Nov6/Nov23-Dec6, 1985)

Country Of Origin		
USA	UK	NZ
34 (42.5%)	9 (11.3%)	37 46.2%)

Top rating programmes from the United States in this period included:

Happy Days (R) (Mon/Tues)
Riptide (Mon)
Miami Vice (Tues)
The A-Team (Tues)
Ripley's Believe It Or Not (Th)
Magnum PI (Fri)
The Cosby Show (Sat)
Who's The Boss (Sat)
Who Will Love My Children(MTV) (Sat)
Choices of the Heart(MTV) (Sun)
She's In the Army Now(MTV) (Sun)
Something About Amelia(MTV) (Sun)
Scarecrow & Mrs King (Sat)
One Day At A Time (Sat)
Annual Stuntman Awards (Sat)
Disney (Sun)
Benson (Sun)
More Wild, Wild West (Sun)

All the above programmes were scheduled in prime time (6-11pm), with 7-8pm being the mean starting time.

A majority of these programmes screened on Saturday and Sunday evenings, a time that consistently attracts the largest viewing audiences in New Zealand. Because the largest possible audience is at home, within reach of the television set, it is possible to argue that there is a natural relationship between what iis offering and numbers watching. Commercial considerations are not the only factor here as it should be remembered that Sunday evenings are commercial-free. Although this is rather a chicken-and-egg problem, it could be an area for fruitful research, following the example set by Webster and Wakshlag (1983).[18]

Another consideration is the nature of competing attractions between the two channels. Programme scheduling in New Zealand is still motivated by a need to achieve 'complementarity', a cumbersome term used to describe deliberate efforts to provide a choice between the two channels in peak viewing times. Given the limited signals available, this is not always feasible but some success in dividing the audience fairly equally has been achieved, to the satisfaction of many.

Thus, in November 1985, TV2 offered light fare in the form of MTVs on Sunday evenings (She's in the Army Now), whilst TV1 offered more 'serious' fare (University Challenge, Mansfield Park). This does not necessarily mean that TV2 is the 'slob channel' and TV1 the 'snob channel', for a programme mix prevents either channel from becoming too closely identified with a fixed audience-profile (unlike in earlier, more openly-competitive days). There is some talk now that channel-audience specificity will not be so easy to avoid once competition from a third channel appears. It has been suggested that TV1 and TV2 should be converted to a two-channel system that would more closely resemble a BBC1/BBC2 set-up, or even a ITV/Channel 4 relationship.

Ratings are useful indications of audience behaviour but they cannot convey emotional or intellectual responses to viewing. Audience appreciation scores are a better source for such information but unfortunately the BCNZ does not keep as sophisticated and as thorough records as the Audience Appreciation Reports of the IBA and BBC. Programme Assessment charts tend to be an after-thought attached to Viewing Diaries but cumulative results to show there is some consistency in audience reactions.

In the period surveyed (November 1985), the ten most appreciated programmes were:

TABLE 4

	Type	Origin	Rank
Road Runner	wildlife doc	UK	1
The Good Life	comedy	UK	2
The Cosby Show	comedy	US	3
Tibet	social doc	UK	4
Out in the Cold	wildlife doc	UK	5
What About Mum & Dad	social doc	US	6=
Journey Across Latitude 45	wildlife doc	NZ	6=
I Like That One:2	requested repeats	NZ	8
Back to the Future	film promo	US	9
Wonderful World Disney	childrens	US	10=
To Find My Son	MTV	US	10=
Network/Regional News		NZ	10=

(Source: Audience Research, BCNZ)

As in the table over, 'information/factual' programmes predominate over 'entertainment' equivalents in monthly assessment lists. Some popular, that is, high-rating programmes also appear near the top of such lists, as Disney and The Cosby Show in the table provided. The monthly Assessment Reports also provide information about differences of opinion due to age and/or gender. A lower=ranked programme such as Magnum PI (ranked 52nd equal overall) received higher appreciation scores from younger viewers (5-14 years gave it 91 out of a 100), than from older viewers (35-54 years, 48). Conversely, Coronation Street (19th equal overall) rated more highly with older viewers (55 or more years, 78) than with younger viewers (5-14 years, 27). Female viewers (82) rated Tenko more highly than male viewers (65). Some programmes (The Good Life, The Cosby Show) displayed only minor variations, receiving fairly universal acclaim. Records such as these could be fruitful areas for further research, as the IBA and BBC Reports have proven to be. They certainly deserve more credit amongst New Zealand television bureaucrats.

Of course I have been dealing with the top stratum of television performance here; the cream at the top of the solid, middle-ground of television programming. First screenings and repeats of American programmes fill a good slice of week-day afternoons, Saturday and Sunday daylight hours, and the late evenings of New Zealand television schedules. It is difficult to generalise across such a range of times and programmes but on the whole American programmes meet with mild-to-middling success outside of prime time. The bête noire of international television Dallas has never achieved much success in New Zealand--certainly nothing like its performance on BBC1. In the second week of March 1986, for instance, it attracted only 12 per cent of the viewing audience, screening at 10 pm on Monday. Dynasty (Tuesday at 8.30 pm) did a little better at 18 per cent, but not as well as the New Zealand current affairs programme Closeup on the other channel, which attracted 20 per cent.

Long-term analysis shows that audiences for many American programmes tend to remain stable, or gradually decline. It should be noted, however, that the

New Zealand audience can display idiosyncratic quirks at times. In 1985, re-screenings of The Beverly Hillbillies, making a return from the 1960s, attracted audiences in excess of 20 per cent on Saturday mornings. This and other American repeats (Get Smart, Bonanza, The Munsters) have made Saturday mornings a feast of Americana. Their appeal is not just for nostalgia buffs as this material is new to the major portion of its audience. Saturday mornings now provide an attractive 'target audience' for advertisers but as yet the excesses of the American 'kidvid ghetto' have not developed. The host/audience participation format make Saturday mornings closer to something like the British Saturday SuperStore.

The American cop-show Hill Street Blues has been an attraction since its earliest screenings. New Zealand was in fact the first overseas success for this series and it continues to make regular appearances in the top ten ratings. Unlike the United Kingdom, it has received the benefits of stable scheduling. According to Des Monaghan, it has also attracted a 'large number of people who normally claim not to watch American programmes.'[19] Outside the States everyone was scared of it/ We stuck with it.'[20] The complex style and high emotional content of the American series may certainly have modified some attitudes to American programmes generally, but it is doubtful whether it has modified perceptions of American society. It is more likely that the mediated 'realism' and 'authenticity' of Hill Street Blues has confirmed perceptions of America as a violent and bloody society, as it is often portrayed in other 'non-realistic' fare. Programmes like Hill Street Blues can increase an appreciation of the ability of American television to produce atypical television, with social awareness and subtlety if character, but they offer few alternative visions of social order.

Despite the abundance of the abundance of industry records recording the progress of American programmes in New Zealand, the geat majority of debate about their presence here still takes place at the level of superficial opinion-passing and allegations of effects. There is an abundance of such opinions (some

appear shortly) but as yet there has been no systematic appraisal of these. Two limited surveys of attitudes to American programmes on New Zealand screens (Lealand 1983, 1985) provide some information but results tend to reflect the views of individuals with strong opinions. The 1983 survey of 246 viewers in the South Island city of Christchurch showed that there was a marked preference for programmes from the United Kingdom, above any other alternatives. 76 per cent nominated United Kingdom programmes as their Most Prefered choice, with 69 per cent citing American programmes as their Least Prefered. This pro-British bias also reflected on local productions, with 35 per cent of respondents showing little faith in local content. Nearly 80 per cent in all age categories believed American television provided an 'unrealistic depiction of life', being seen as neither 'good' television nor good representations of American society. American television programmes in New Zealand seemed to provide examples as to how different life here was, and the routes it should not take.

In the 1985 survey, a more comprehensive appraisal of New Zealanders' use and attitude to a range of American popular culture imports, 364 respondents in two urban and one rural/small town electorates offered the following responses to three American programmes:

TABLE 5

Programme	How Often Viewed				Level Of Appreciation		
	Often %	Sometimes %	Seldom %	Never %	High %	Low %	None %
Dallas	12.3	11.7	17.3	58.7	13.1	22.6	64.3
Dynasty	11.5	10.6	15.6	62.3	12.0	23.2	64.8
Hill Street Blues	33.8	26.5	19.0	20.7	38.8	39.7	21.5

As an opening question in this 1985 survey, respondents were requested to nominate aspects of American popular culture they particularly liked or disliked. About 50 per cent singled 'American TV shows' for their displeasure whilst 10 per cent cited them as the American cultural import they most liked.

A survey of its readers by the New Zealand consumer affairs monthly Consumer in 1985 resulted in nearly one-quarter of the 287 responding with complaints about the level of 'American' programmes and 'violence' on television. [21] Caution is advised, however, at drawing any grand conclusions from this and other surveys as they tend to draw upon a rather select population. For example, the 1985 survey cited above involved a questionnaire that was mailed to 1000 subjects and the views of the 600 plus who failed to respond remain unknown. It is conceivable that a fair number of these could have been uncritical, or even enthusiastic viewers of American programmes, members of the large audiences for programmes like Who's the Boss and The Cosby Show.

Nevertheless these surveys do suggest that there is a marked aversion to American television imports amongst a considerable number of New Zealanders. What has not been considered here, however, are attitudes to television imports from other sources (other than in comments aside). The role of British imports may be more culturally significant for New Zealand than anything imported from America, even though actual numbers are fewer. In world terms New Zealand is one of the largest importers of British television programmes and BBC and ITV productions (although viewers here seldom bother to distinguish between the two) provide the norm in terms of production values, acting, style, themes and atmosphere. Other programmes, both domestic and imported, are tested against such criteria.

It is ironic that Coronation Street and The EastEnders are often seen as more culturally appropriate to the New Zealand way of life than are Dallas or Dynasty, even though all four programmes bear little resemblence to the life experience of the majority of New Zealanders. Accusations of

cultural imperialism are rarely levelled against the British presence in New Zealand; the full force of such wrath is reserved for the American presence. In television and purely numerical terms, the United States is certainly the more fitting recipient (see Table 1).

It is in public statements in newspapers and magazines that the strongest opinions appear. Their incidence increased quite markedly in 1985-86, as a result of the following events:

1. Television New Zealand celebrated 25 years of transmission, in June 1985, and reactions to this celebration included some uncomplimentary appraisals of past performance (especially in the area of local production).

2. The confrontation between New Zealand and the United States over the right of nuclear warships to enter New Zealand ports, and the resulting 'impasse' over the ANZUS alliance, lead to frequent public questioning of <u>all</u> aspects of American-New Zealand relations.

3. The brief of the Royal Commission on Broadcasting and Related Telecommunications, appointed early 1985, included investigations into the following aspects of television;

   The purchasing by the Corporation of overseas programmes, including, the success achieved, the difficulties encountered, and the opportunities to tap services infrequently or never used (2d)

   The benefits, the relative costs, and the staffing implications of of extending in-house production of drama, nature, science, religious, and cultural programmes, light entertainment programmes, quiz and game shows and sports programmes (2f)

   The extent to which the Corporation draws on the products of independent television production companies and the New Zealand film industry and the conditions, benefits, and costs of doing so (2g)

   The cases for and against fixing a quota for programmes to be produced in New Zealand, the appropriate level of any quota, and the desirability of using the Australian points system or a modification of it in applying a quota. (2i)

4. Hearings conducted before the Broadcasting Tribunal, by contestants for the third television channel, included pledges concerning local content and promises to 'reflect the multi-cultural nature of contemporary New Zealand society'.

5. New satellite links across the Pacific (shared with Channel Nine, Sydney) resulted in increased American content in news bulletins from early 1986, with a late-night programme <u>The World Tonight</u> absorbing some of the remainder of the 3-4 hours offering daily from the ABC and CBS networks. The satellite link also eliminated the time-lag associated with some American entertainment imports, such as <u>Entertainment This Week</u>, which was heralded as arriving on New Zealand screens 'some twelve to eighteen hours before Americans see it.'[22]

6. British imports received a boost as a result of major deal signed between TVNZ and BBC Enterprises in early 1986. This meant that New Zealand would have first option on at least 650 hours of first run and repeat BBC programmes each year, for five years. This deal replace a prior arrangement, whereby New Zealand was included with other countries (usually Australia) in a package-deal for such sales.

7. Extended late night and week-end hours were due to start in April 1986, featuring rock videos, British and American repeats, and older Hollywood feature films.

The combination of these events prompted a flood of comments in the press and public discussion about the state of television in New Zealand, and the role of imported programmes in television schedules. Some examples follow:

> 25 Years of Television in New Zealand is overwhelmingly
> 25 Years of Foreign Television in New Zealand.
>
> Dazzle [23]

> After 25 years of television in New Zealand, a stranger coming to these shores would, with small exception, think he was watching television in Australia, England, or even America, rather than realise he was in a tiny island nation in the South Pacific.
>
> Report of the Maori Economic Development Commission [24]

> For too long, we have too easily accepted the view that the culture of America is superior to our own, and--if nothing else--considerably cheaper.
>
> Peter Tapsell, Minister for the Arts[25]

> If only Ronald Reagan and his aides, jaundiced by David Lange's anti-nuclear stance, had decided to make their ire felt by depriving us of Dallas and all its dynastic clones. The benefits for us would have been immense.
> For this nation, force-fed as it is by TVNZ on a never-ending diet of family sagas from America, is in real peril of having its identity and culture snuffed out, because of so much of this spurious lifestyle is now on our screens.
>
> Television With Barry Shaw [26]

> Mr Lange is wrong. The Americans have found a way of punishing New Zealand for refusing port facilities to their nuclear warships. They have coerced TVNZ into running repeats of repeats of repeats of their boring soap operas no longer acceptable to their own viewers.
>
> New Zealand Listener [27]

> New Zealand film-makers are actively discouraged from producing programmes for local audiences by the prohibitively small fee paid for Kiwi independent programmes by the BCNZ monopoly ... This is not a healthy situation for a young country still moulding its identity. New Zealand needs a more open television system.
>
> New Film Group [28]

A quota system for television must be introduced to strengthen commitment to local production. The quota should be fixed at 50 percent by 1988, and for a third channel 35 percent after three years of launching.
New Zealanders should beware of satellites bearing gifts ... New Zealand must not regress by the 21st century to what it was in the 19th century by becoming a colony, not of the old Empire, but of satellite communications.

Ian Cross, former Chairman of BCNZ [29]

We will not learn about ourselves by watching Dallas and Dynasty on television. We will not understand our history or our origins as a nation or develop a truly national perspective while New Zealand programmes constitute less than two per cent of output.

Sue Kedgley, Executive Director, Independent Producers and Directors Guild [30]

We might be thumbing our noses at the Americans on the matter of defence, but we are succcessfully being colonised in other ways. Overseas news reports on our television screens are now almost invariably American in origin.

New Zealand Listener [31]

My fear that our newly acquired satellite will become a Trojan horse for American imperialism intensifies when I remind myself that we already see more American than New Zealand programmes on our TV screens.

Sue Kedgley [32]

The BCNZ seems set on becoming an overseas rubbish bag for the North American media industry.

New Zealand Listener [33]

Against this tirade of criticism, Television New Zealand announced its intentions, in August 1985, to increase the number of New Zealand programmes screened. In the same month Ron Cornelius, Controller of Programme Production for TVNZ, confirmed TVNZ's intention to produce 50 per cent more peak hour productions over the coming five years. In November 1985, Ruth Harley was appointed as TVNZ's first independent production commissioning editor. In an early interview she commented, 'The very fact that TVNZ has set up the new job indicates, on its part, a willingness to change.' [34] However, in February 1986, the then

Director-General of TVNZ (Allan Martin), sounded a more cautious note. He declared that TVNZ 'would have to sacrifice standards to meet an imposed programme quota under the existing level of production finance'. [35] He claimed than an imposed quota would prevent funds being directed to where they could be best utilised.

This is the crunch factor for all notions of quotas and increased indigenous production--who is going to pay for it, and how will it be funded? Even with its substantial financial base, TVNZ tends to plead poverty when too much is asked of it, so it is difficult to fathom how any third channel contenders (whose future incomes are largely a matter of conjecture) will offer a better deal. Whilst the licence fee remains static (unchanged since 1975) the proportion of revenue derived from this source will continue to deflate. By 1984 it had declined from 30 per cent to 10 per cent in the intervening years since the introduction of the second TVNZ channel. In early 1986, however, rumours were rife about a substantial rise in the licence fee and this is very likely to happen before another year passes.

Calls for increased local production (and most of them are legitimate calls) will have to compete with the clamour for money to be invested elsewhere, especially as the need to for capital investment in new technology and refurbishment of facilities intensifies. Money will also have to be spent on ensuring that third channel operators do not out-bid TVNZ in the acquisition of popular imported programming, as TVNZ faces a new challenge in retaining its audience monopoly.

In August 1985, TVNZ was cited as paying $NZ165 per minute for local independent material, compared with an estimated $55 per minute for imported productions.[36] In its 1985 Annual Report the BCNZ reported that TVNZ spent more than $NZ17.5 million on 'producing and acquiring New Zealand made programmes'. In the same financial year, income from television advertising

sales totalled more than $NZ148 (radio sales adding another $46 million), so there would seem to be some profits to spend. However this income has to be spread over all operating and capital investment activities (both commercial and subsidised) of the Corporation and money provided for local productions quickly disappears into costly individual projects, especially drama productions. Figures released to the Royal Commission on Broadcasting, in October 1985, revealed that TVNZ spent an average of $NZ249,023 an hour on producing indigenous television drama,[37] a considerable cost when contrasted with the cheapness of imported equivalents.[38] Some recent New Zealand-produced drama has been even more expensive, such as the historical series Hanlon, although some of the costs have been recouped from overseas sales.

At nearly a quarter of a million dollars per hour, it is not surprising that $17.5 million would not provide for much domestic television drama, especially after the bread-and-butter productions have taken their share. Cost over-runs on local drama productions have drawn the attention (and wrath) of politicians in the past. The controversy of the historical series The Governor, in the 1970s, is a prime example. Local drama also has to compete with dominant imported equivalents once it reaches the screen, which provides another hurdle. Although there are signs that New Zealand viewers are beginning to warm a little towards home-grown drama, most still suffer in comparison with imports.[39]

It would be worthwhile to pause and ask a leading question at this juncture: Why should drama be considered as the best means of inculcating a sense of 'national identity'? Is it necessarily the best vehicle for this task and are there not better ways of spending limited resources? It is just as likely--probably more likely--that other television genres are more effective at touching on the life experiences of viewers and notions of national identity. Certainly 'television events' such as the Telethon, an irregular fund-raising for charity television spectacular,

create a more visible sense of New Zealand-as-a-nation than any dramatised portrayals of the past. Telethon is unequalled as an television event and shows little sign of exhausting its appeal. In the 1985 Telethon, for example, New Zealanders contributed more than $NZ6 million, from a population of little more than three million. Two weeks later, New Zealanders contributed another $NZ4 to Live Aid, in active participation in this international celebration of popular culture. It is at such times that a sense of nationhood is within New Zealand's grasp. Television sport, especially events involving New Zealand teams at an international level, invariably attract the attention of a majority of the country. For example, in Winter 1984, 55 per cent of New Zealanders watched the the final New Zealand-Australia rugby test, making it the third most popular programme of the year.[40] New Zealand-generated satire on television consistently rates highly, as do 'service' programmes such as network and regional news, wildlife and social documentaries, and coverage of politics. It is in the 'actuality' of such television messages that national identity lurks, rather than in the 'art' of televised drama. It is possible that the New Zealand viewing audience may resent being force-fed increased, self-conscious levels of the latter.

The subtitle of this paper asks whether foreign (that is, 'American') television programmes screening in New Zealand offer 'Windows on the World or Wicked Imperialism?' The short answer is that they are both and neither. American television fictions provide colourful glimpses into a vividly-hued, melodramatic, fantastical world that is at once both universal and alien. But as this paper illustrates, American programmes also dominate the schedules of New Zealand television, in a non-conspiratorial but nonetheless imperialistic manner.

Whilst the critics of such intrusions are very vocal, there is largely silence from the more numerous crowds who shoose to watch such

programming. What satisfactions or gratifications they derive from such viewing remains unknown. There is a desperate need for research to ask such questions and possibly answer the larger question: Cultural imperialism--does it matter? It is the hope of this author that this paoer may propel some eager scholar in this direction.

NOTES

1. Richard Hoggart, An English Temper: Essays of Education, Culture and Communication, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1982), 176.

2. The Otago Daily Times (Dunedin), on August 6 1985, reported the results of a poll that showed '71 per cent of New Zealanders are less than enraptured by their Australian cousins'. Queensland's Minister of Ethnic Affairs responded by saying, 'Australians welcome most New Zealanders except for unmarried mothers and dole bludgers'.

3. Sight and Sound, vol 54 no 4, Autumn 1985.

4. Source: McNair Anderson Audience Surveys, 1983.

5. B & T advertising, marketing and media weekly (Australia), April 13, 1984.

6. Philip Adams. Speech notes (supplied by request).

7. Richard White, 'A Backwater Awash: The Australian Experience of Americanisation', Theory, Culture and Society, vol 1 no 3, 1983, 108-122.

8. Source: Audience Research Unit, BCNZ, 1985.

9. Tapio Varis, 'Global Traffic in Television', Journal of Communication, Winter 1974.

10. Geoffrey Lealand, 'A Nation Tuned Into Itself: A Study of Television in New Zealand, Paying Particular Attention to the Impact of the American Contribution', Dissertation, American Culture PhD Program, Bowling Green State University (Ohio), 1983.

11. James Ritchie, Television in New Zealand: Research and Development, Psychology research series no. 7, (Hamilton: University of Waikato, 1977).

12. Patrick Day, 'A Content-Analysis of New Zealand Television Fiction With Regard To Likely Audience Effects', Thesis, University of Canterbury (Christchurch), 1976.

13. Televiews 100, (Wellington: Marketing Services of TVNZ, 1984).

14. Interviewed in Lealand (1983), 58-59.

15. Jeremy Tunstall, The Media Are American: Anglo-American Media in the World, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).

16. Such as in 'The Export of Meaning: Cross-cultural Readings of American TV Fiction', Paper presented to the Manchester Symposium on Broadcasting, 1985.

17. As elaborated in Herbert Schiller, Mass Communication and American Empire, (New York: Kelly, 1969).

18. James Webster and Jacob Wakshlag, 'A Theory of Television Program Choice', Communication Research, vol 10 no 4, October 1983.

19. In Lealand (1983), 62.

20. Interviewed in More (Auckland), May 1985, 49.

21. Consumer (Wellington), October 1985.

22. Warren Mayne's TV Week, New Zealand Listener, January 11, 1986.

23. Dazzle (Wellington), no 1, August/September 1985, 22.

24. Dominion (Wellington), August 14, 1985.

25. Evening Post (Wellington), December 7, 1984.

26. New Zealand Herald (Auckland), November 9, 1985.

27. Letter to the Editor, New Zealand Listener (Wellington), November 16, 1985.

28 Auckland Star, August 24, 1985.

29. Dominion, February 20, 1986.

30. Dominion, October 15, 1985.

31. Letter to the Editor, New Zealand Listener, March 1, 1986.

32. 'What I'd Watch', New Zealand Listener, November 23, 1985.

33. Letter to the Editor, New Zealand Listener, July 20, 1985.

34. Auckland Star, November 13, 1985.

35. Evening Post, February 18, 1986.

36. Auckland Star, August 24, 1985.

37. Evening Post, October 2, 1985.

38. In its annual 'Global Prices for TV Films', Variety (April 17, 1985) cited the following price ranges for American material supplied to New Zealand:

Half-hour Episode	Feature Film
$US625-700	$US1,800-3,000

This compares with the prices paid by United Kingdom purchasers:

$US1,200-14,000	$60,000-3,000,000

39. One survey published in 1984 by the Audience Research Unit, BCNZ on 'New Zealand Drama/Country GP' reported that a significant number of respondents thought that the standard of local drama had improved in recent years, but that it was still perceived as being of a 'poorer standard' than imports by 41 per cent of respondents, with another 43 per cent considering it to be the 'same standard'.

40. Source: Audience Research Unit, BCNZ, 1985.

APPENDIX

ORIGINS OF TELEVISION PROGRAMMES

(October 26-November 8/November 23-December 6, 1985)

COUNTRY	CHANNEL			
	TV1	TV2	Both Channels	
	(Hours and minutes)			
USA	129:23	111:40	241:03	(39.7%)
UK	63:43	51:50	115:33	(19.1%)
NZ	148:09	63:35	211:44	(34.9%)
AUST	4:42	27:45	32:27	(5.3%)
OTHER	3:35	2:45	6:18	(1.0%)

FEATURE FILMS

	(Hours and minutes)
USA	59:00
UK	5:10
OTHER	10:10